

Gronlund and Wakefield Debate.

EDITOR ADVOCATE:—Considerable interest in economic questions is of late being manifested in the state university at Lawrence. Several of the younger professors are liberal and progressive in their ideas, and many of the brightest students are studying the modern, or humanitarian, social economy of Henry George, Thomas G. Shearman and others. Lawrence Gronlund, the socialist author, has given several lectures to the students, and W. H. T. Wakefield enlightens them on land monopoly, corporate franchise monopolies, unequal taxation, and the single tax for revenue, with public ownership of all public utilities, as the remedy that will abolish poverty and render very large fortunes a relic of barbarism. A joint debate between Gronlund and Wakefield on the relative merits of socialism and the rental value tax as a solution of pending economic problems on January 9 was very largely attended by students and citizens and excited much interest.

One of the points made the single tax advocate struck us as worthy of notice, viz: That the republican theory of a protective tariff was indirectly a recognition of the principle of exempting labor products from taxation, by a system of bounties, given at the expense of agriculture, but in a manner to benefit only employers of labor at the expense of labor. He also showed that the greatest benefit of the tariff bounty eventually went to wealthy owners of valuable lands—mines, forests, water powers, city real estate, railway terminals, and franchises, etc., they being, in their nature, monopolies in which there can be no real competition. The many republicans present at the debate were surprised when Mr. Gronlund said the democratic party was that of individualism, but that the republican party had a strong tendency towards socialism, and from its ranks must come most of the recruits to state socialism.

Mr. Wakefield, in reply, said it was true the republican party had no theory of the rights of the individual, because it had no theory of limiting oppression of individuals by law; therefore, it was the party of class privilege and plutocracy, and his chief objection to state socialism lay in the fact that with such men as now constitute the bulk of both old party politicians in power (even under state socialism) government would be used to benefit a class at the expense of the masses; that the reform of politics and governments was indeed "an irredeemable dream, and it was better that government be reduced to the minimum than raised to the maximum, Switzerland being cited as the minimum and Russia as the maximum, that the functions of government should be confined to administration of things public in their nature, so as to prevent infringements of natural rights of the individual but leaving the strictly personal things to personal initiative and control.

Mr. Gronlund maintained that government is a good thing; the worst better than none, and the good the greatest possible blessing to mankind.

The chief difference between the speakers seemed to be in the facts that while Mr. Wakefield would nationalize or municipalize everything in its nature public and a monopoly, and only these, thereby confining functions of government to the minimum, Mr. Gronlund would extend the powers and functions of government to all capital and production, thus maximizing government and making the individual but a cog in the legal machine.

Wakefield, contended that his plan

would give all the benefits of socialism, without its disadvantages and dangers of a strong and probably corrupt political machine under which the individual would be powerless.

The Lawrence papers refused to notice the debate, either before or after its occurrence, but the university papers had good reports.

Alarming.

EDITOR ADVOCATE:—The utter disregard for truth on the part of the public press of the country must be regarded by the thoughtful mind as a menace to good government and a source of great danger to the republic. We have been accustomed to regard the press as the civilizer of nations and as a potent factor in the education and enlightenment of the people, and so far as it is used in the right direction, that fact remains true; but when the press becomes so debased through political influences as to stoop to the meanest kind of lying and hypocrisy in order to secure the success of a political party, or of party measures which may greatly affect the welfare of the people, it becomes a destroying agent and sooner or later, if the evil be not abolished, will result in the destruction of the government.

It is not my purpose in this article to give a detailed account of the lies published by the press at large to prove the correctness of the charges which I have made against it, and not even that of the state of Kansas, and you will excuse me if I refuse to undertake to recount only those which have emanated from the notorious Topeka Capital, for it would be a herculean task from which the most courageous reformer would shrink; but let it suffice to give a very mild sample of hypocrisy, if it might not more appropriately be called a lie, taken from the Kansas City Gazette, claiming to be a quotation from the report of Bradstreet's commercial agency for 1893, which reads as follows:

As the result of a careful investigation, there are found to be 800,000 wage workers out of employment in the United States on whom is dependent a population of 1,950,000 souls.

To which the Gazette makes reply as follows:

This estimate is of an ultra-conservative and partial order; and a thorough search would easily disclose 1,000,000 wage workers out of employment representing a population of 2,400,000.

And it further says that a year ago Bradstreet in recounting the unprecedented prosperity of 1892 announced that labor had never before been so generally employed and so well remunerated. I am not in possession of Bradstreet's report for 1892, and consequently not informed as to who has lied, Bradstreet or the Gazette, but there is one thing of which I am definitely certain, and I presume that the hundreds of thousands of wage earners who, like myself, were out of employment at the beginning of 1893 and remained so during both 1892 and 1893 are equally certain that there is a lie out somewhere. The laboring class has not for years been well employed, but has, in fact, on the contrary undergone hardship, privation and suffering on account of a lack of work. The fringe of the unemployed has been increasing, and whether under democratic or republican rule, there has been no perceptible difference in the rate of increase. Such statements as the above are so full of deception that they ought to condemn the author as a liar of the basest type, whether they come from Bradstreet's commercial report, from the Gazette, or any other source.

And who does not know that had the republican party succeeded in keeping

in power its leader, with the support of the republican press, regardless of the destructive panic through which we have just passed and the blighting effect of which still is felt in every nook and corner of this great commonwealth, would be using every means, foul or fair, within their reach to prove the unprecedented prosperity of 1893 as well as that of 1892. But the democrats are in power now and all the lying, hypocrisy and deceit which can possibly be invoked from the powers of hell must be used to prove to the people that under democratic rule the country is speedily going to the bad.

Dangerous democracy, what a world of suffering and want and misery it has wrought in one short year! But let us look backward for a moment over the four years previous to the inauguration of Cleveland's administration. Were there no business failures? no strikes? no lockouts? no mortgage foreclosures? were there no tramps infesting the cities? The people surely have not forgotten the steady decline in prices which continued through the years named and which resulted in the loss of so many of their homes by mortgage; they have not forgotten the Homestead affair, nor the trouble at the mining regions of Tennessee. Only those who are uninformed will be deceived, and they are the ones who should have the facts instead of lies set before them. And notwithstanding the false statements of the subsidized press to prove to the contrary, the fact remains that we are not suffering solely from bad democratic legislation but are reaping the whirlwind which was sown to the wind by the republican party, and which was not staid nor prevented by the democratic party. If the press would publish the truth in regard to legislative matters leaving party prejudice out of all such questions it might be possible in a great measure even under our present system to purify the politics of the country, but with party prejudice not only controlling the press of the country, but through the press entering into our legislative halls it is really no wonder that we should be compelled to witness such disgraceful occurrences as took place in Topeka a year ago. It is no wonder that under a system embodying so many incentives to corruption and fraud that partisan strife should have run riot to the extent manifest at the state capitol where private citizens, maddened by political prejudice, resorted to mob violence to defeat the will of the people, and when officers of the law, acting under the advice of political leaders, refused to respect and obey the executive authority of the state.

The existing conditions are but the logical result of a false system and should be corrected as soon as it is possible to do it. Will a subsidized press continue to augment the dangers that now threaten the destruction of our government by continuing to deceive the public by misrepresentation of facts, by hypocrisy and lying, or shall we hope for a speedy change that through and by the promulgation of truth we may save the country from anarchy and revolution?

J. C. HOBSON.

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